**Chickasaw Cultural Center Opens July 24**

Located on 109 acres of rolling hills, woodlands and streams adjacent to the Chickasaw National Recreation Area near Sulphur, Oklahoma, the Chickasaw Cultural Center is the culmination of a vision born more than twenty years ago. Set to open July 24, the center utilizes the latest technology, live demonstrations, ancient artifacts and natural outdoor spaces to tell the Chickasaw story.

“Chickasaw people have long dreamed of a special place to celebrate, embrace and share the culture and heritage which binds us together as a people,” said Bill Anoatubby, governor of the Chickasaw Nation. “That dream has now become reality as we open a center which reflects the vision, imagination, resilience and spirit of the Chickasaw people.”

Dreams of the center began more than 20 years ago and gained momentum over time. In October 2000, more than 1,200 tribal citizens responded to a survey which asked for comments and suggestions regarding a Chickasaw Cultural Center. Language, beliefs, ceremonies, history and customs were among the most popular suggestions. Art and music, food and medicine, prominent Chickasaw men and women, and a living village with traditional dwellings were also mentioned.

Numerous informal requests by citizens were also considered during planning and construction. Building upon citizen requests, the cultural center utilizes live performances, high technology multimedia exhibits, and galleries as well as natural outdoor spaces to revitalize and preserve tribal culture for future generations.

“Chickasaws of all ages and from all walks of life contributed to the development of the center and the programming that will be available,” said Gov. Anoatubby. “It is beautiful and provides an opportunity for us to tell the remarkable history of Chickasaw people.

“We want to not only preserve our history, but recognize that we have a living, thriving, growing culture to share with others.”

**Cultural Center Campus**

The center features more than 96,000 square feet of indoor space, including an Exhibit Center, the Holisso Research Center, a large-format theatre, and an administration building.

An amphitheater, sky terrace, traditional village, and several water features, are featured on the grounds of the Cultural Center.

Inside the Exhibit Center, a replica of an 18th century Council House serves as an orientation theatre. The Council House will be more than 60 feet wide and will look similar to the buildings constructed in Chickasaw villages long before European contact in 1540.

Council houses were commonly used until the Removal of Chickasaws from their homelands in the 1830s.

**Experiencing the culture**

Exploration of the **Chikasha Poya** **Exhibit Center** begins in a waiting area which features colorful mosaic tiles, trickling water, and a domed ceiling.

Visitors hear the beginnings of the Chickasaw story in an orientation film shown in a replica of an 18th century Council House theater.

After the film, the projection screen rises and visitors walk beneath a rock ledge and over a stream into the Spirit Forest, a place where technology and theatrical effects mimic the natural sights and sounds of a forest to tell the ancient Chickasaw story.

Designers of the Spirit Forest made use of an intriguing blend of realistic forest elements, technology and theatrical effects to mimic the natural sights and sounds of a forest.   
  
What is perhaps most striking when you enter the forest is the degree of realism of the physical components. Large grey boulders with splotches of green moss look, at first glance, as though they may have been trucked in directly from the forest floor.   
  
Those boulders line paths which wind among ferns, grass, saplings and gnarled roots rising out of the earth to support massive tree trunks. A spring of water trickles over a boulder into a small stone pool which empties into a tiny clear bubbling brook.   
  
But the physical elements of the forest are only the beginning. Designers of the forest have concealed projectors, theatrical lighting, infrared motion detectors, timers, speakers and other advanced technological equipment within various elements of the forest.

Stories of ancient ancestors, mounds and artifacts and the separation of the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations are continued in separate galleries.

The interactive Removal area tells the story of the Chickasaw journey from the southeastern homelands to Indian Territory.

Visitors will experience the removal from the homelands to Indian Territory in a long corridor lined with sculpture of animals, people and vehicles. Changes in light will simulate the changing seasons and will recreate a moment in time during removal.

A rear-screen projection simulates clouds moving across the sky. Voices in the background whisper thoughts Chickasaws may have had as they travel from the woodlands of the homelands to the prairie of Indian Territory.

Another exhibit provides a glimpse into old Indian Territory. An exhibit featuring a representation of the trains the Dawes Commission used as offices while in the Chickasaw Nation will be presented.

Text, photos and objects pertaining to the pre-allotment and allotment periods will be interspersed throughout.

A variety of language learning stations are placed throughout the Exhibit Center. Touch a picture of an object, hear the Chickasaw word aloud and repeat the word into a microphone. Then hear your own voice speaking the Chickasaw word.

Visitors will also experience a stomp dance exhibit before returning to the main lobby of the Exhibit Center.

**Sharing the story**

Throughout the center, visitors will be encouraged to explore important aspects of Chickasaw life, including nature, spirituality, family, valor, learning and law through a variety of multimedia presentations as well as human storytellers and guides.

A large-format **Anoli’ Theater** will feature a 40’x 60’ screen and seat 350 viewers. The theater will serve as a venue to tell the Chickasaw story.

Sharing the Chickasaw story is not limited to the indoors. Outdoor spaces will feature rich native vegetation, indigenous stone and trails, all situated near a pond and Rock Creek.

Other outdoor areas will include demonstration gardens and a traditional life ways educational village featuring a number of traditional Chickasaw houses similar to those at Kullihoma. Areas will also be set aside for stomp dance and other traditional ceremonies.

“One important aspect of the CCC is that it is inclusive,” said Dr. Amanda Cobb-Greetham, administrator of the Chickasaw Nation Division of History and Culture. “You don’t have to be Chickasaw to benefit from a visit to the Cultural Center.

“Obviously, visitors have the opportunity to learn more about Chickasaw culture, but they also have the chance to learn more about Southeastern Native culture, which is also an important piece of American, Oklahoman, and Mississippian history.”

**A Taste of Culture**

Located inside the **Anoli Theater**, the **Aaimpa Café** features an extensive menu including dishes inspired by traditional Chickasaw fare, such as pashofa, grape dumplings and Indian fry bread. Seasonal items such as possum grapes, wild onions and wild greens are also included on the menu.

The café will also incorporate other native recipes and selections such as rice and beans. Home-grown vegetables and herbs, grown in the Cultural Center greenhouse and demonstration gardens will be used in recipes. The indoor dining area can seat more than 200 people. An outdoor eating area, multipurpose room and catering kitchen are also available.

The **Aba’ Aanowa Sky Terrace** will offer visitors a place to reflect and view the traditional village.

Traditional Chickasaw houses, including two summer houses, two winter houses, a large council house, a corn crib, a replica mound and a stockade fence are featured in the Traditional Village.

The grounds of the **Chikasha Inchokka’** **Traditional Village** will bustle with Stomp dances, stickball, storytelling, spirit lessons, language and cultural demonstrations and other traditional activities.

 “The key to the Traditional Village and the Culture Center is not just to see things, but to do things,” said Dr. Cobb-Greetham. “The Chickasaw Cultural Center offers visitors opportunities to embrace the Chickasaw culture in many different ways. For example, on any given day, visitors can learn about genealogy, history, stomp dancing, cultivating indigenous plants, stickball, arts and crafts, and the list goes on. In addition, we will be constantly updating our programming so that as we share our culture, we can grow together.”

Walk the woodland trails complete with interpretive exhibits and hear the gentle sounds of nature. Landscaping features trees and plants indigenous to both the Chickasaw ancestral homelands and Oklahoma and foliage was meticulously selected to conserve water.

**An academic resource**

The Chickasaw Cultural Center is also designed to be a clearinghouse for study, scholarship and research of Chickasaws, and Southeastern tribal culture and history.

The **Holisso Research Center** will house an extensive genealogy collection, photo archives and historic papers and serve as a center for all citizens to research their lineage.

The study center will be the premier facility for Chickasaw research, as well as overall Southeastern cultural study. Benefits of the study center will be the expansion in the number of Native scholars, as well as an increase of knowledge among visitors, both Chickasaw and non-Chickasaw.

Situated adjacent to the Chickasaw National Recreation Area, the Chickasaw Cultural Center is located 10 miles east of I-35 on Charles Cooper Memorial Road in Sulphur.

For more information about the Chickasaw Cultural Center, log on to [www.chickasawculturalcenter.com](http://www.chickasawculturalcenter.com).

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**Chickasaw Cultural Center Fact Sheet**

**The Mission of the Chickasaw Cultural Center is:**

* To capture the essence of Chickasaw culture;
* To revitalize and share Chickasaw culture and traditions through cultural demonstrations, and community outreach activities;
* To preserve, protect, and add to Chickasaw history through archives, collections, and research;
* To provide educational opportunities to the Chickasaw people; and
* To share our unique culture with the world.

## CCC Logo

**The Spiral.** The spiral symbolizes the wind, which depicts life’s journey from birth to the afterlife; like the wind, we are reminded of the many journeys of our people and our tribe

**The Sacred Eye.** This symbol represents the eye of God (Aabiniili') or the all-seeing eye; the eye also signifies the Chickasaw worldview through which we observe the world

**The Sun.** The sun is an ancient symbol that signifies rebirth or renewal; it also represents the giver of light and the heavenly realm

## Campus Facts

* The Chickasaw Cultural Center (CCC) campus is located on 109 acres of land adjacent to the Chickasaw National Recreation Area near Sulphur, Oklahoma
* Campus buildings include more than 96,000 square feet of indoor space
* Outdoor spaces include an amphitheater, sky terrace, water pavilion, honor garden, and café porch
* The Traditional Village buildings include replicas of a council house, summer house, winter house, corn crib, ceremonial mound, and stockade fence
* The council house in the Traditional Village covers 3,000 sq. feet and towers nearly three stories tall
* The large format Anoli' Theater includes a 60-foot high, 2,400 square-foot screen and seats 350 people
* The 20,000 square foot Holisso Research Center features state-of-the-art cold storage, artifact storage, an intake/decontamination room, a library reading room, and a rare book collection

**Construction**

* More than 300 miles of reinforcing steel weighing over one million pounds was used in the construction of the CCC
* Campus facilities include enough copper wiring to stretch from Sulphur to Tupelo, Miss., and back
* There are approximately 1,000 lighting fixtures on campus and nearly 60 miles of audio/visual cabling
* Construction required 14,000 cubic yards of concrete―enough to build 200 three-bedroom homes
* 430 two-foot diameter piers buried 70 feet into the ground anchor the structures
* Wooden beams made of Douglas Fir grown in Oregon and milled in Florida adorn building exteriors
* Stone quarried in Arkansas was used on building exteriors
* The re-creation of an eighteenth century Council House in the Chikasha Poya Exhibit Center includes more than 600 feet of timber that totals five tons
* The Council House timbers were prepared by Florida-based ThemeWorks Inc., whose portfolio includes Universal Studios and Sea World
* Tile was imported from Scoula Mosaicisti Del Friuli in Spilimbergo, Italy
* Landscaping throughout the campus features trees and plants that are indigenous to Oklahoma, as well as traditional Chickasaw homelands of the Southeast

**Technology**

* Campus facilities include more than 940 miles of copper wiring
* There are nearly 60 miles of audio/visual cabling on campus
* Language Learning Stations (LLS) in the Chikasha Poya Exhibit Center feature interactive touch-screen technology
* On each LLS, a visitor can touch the picture of an object, which triggers the computer to say the Chickasaw word aloud; the visitor repeats that word into a microphone, and the computer plays back the recording so the visitor can hear themselves saying the word
* The Spirit Forest contains native plants and animals, running water, and interactive sights and sounds reminiscent of our Southeastern homelands
* There are 60 sensors and 176 theatrical lights in the Spirit Forest
* Lighting in the Spirit Forest changes from “day” to “night” in a matter of minutes
* Sound and lighting effects in the Spirit Forest effectively mimic thunder and lightning
* The Removal corridor tells the story of our terrible journey from our southeastern homelands through multimedia experiences, paintings, and statues
* A special screen in the Removal ceiling simulates clouds moving across the sky
* Strategically placed speakers project voices whispering thoughts about removal
* The large format theater features a 2,400 square foot screen
* High definition film capability includes a 35/70 mm projector and a 15/70 mm projector
* Theater sound is delivered through a 22,000 watt speaker system
* Headphones will be available to translate films into eight languages
* The 20,000 square foot Holisso Research Center features state-of-the-art cold storage, artifact storage, and a decontamination room

## Language

* As much as possible, all signs, and even the buildings themselves, are named in Chickasaw
* Many of the Café menu items incorporate Chickasaw words, such as the “Akanka' (Chicken) Sandwich”
* Interactive Language Learning Stations (LLS) in the Chikasha Poya Exhibit Center feature touch-screen technology
* On each LLS, a visitor can touch the picture of an object, which triggers the computer to say the Chickasaw word aloud; the visitor repeats that word into a microphone, and the computer plays back the recording so the visitor can hear themselves saying the word

## CCC Building Features

## Retail and Administration Building

* The Souvenir Gift Shop will sell pens, pencils, post cards, and stationary; mugs and cups; t-shirts, blankets, and apparel; posters and maps; toys and puzzles; music CDs; Bedré chocolate; books; and jewelry
* The Administration building will house offices for CCC staff

## Chikasha Poya Exhibit Center

* Inside the Exhibit Center, guests will gather in a waiting room that features mosaic tiles, running water, and a domed ceiling with lighting effects
* An eighteenth century, 1,200 sq. foot Council House serves as an orientation theater; after a 20-minute HD film, the screen rises and visitors walk beneath a rock ledge and over a stream into the Spirit Forest
* The Spirit Forest contains native plants and animals, running water, and interactive sights and sounds reminiscent of our Southeastern homelands
* There are 60 sensors and 176 theatrical lights in the Spirit Forest; the lighting changes so that “day” turns to “night”
* The Removal corridor tells the story of our terrible journey from our southeastern homelands through multimedia experiences, paintings, and statues
* There is a special screen in the Removal ceiling that simulates clouds moving across the sky; additionally, voices are heard in the background, whispering thoughts about removal
* Exhibit areas feature “Indian country,” the period of settlement after removal, the Dawes Commission, Chickasaw governors, ancient Chickasaws, and Chickasaws today
* A Stomp Dance Gallery features holograms and a glowing campfire that simulate our sacred, centuries-old stomp dances

## Holisso Research Center

* The Holisso Center, 20,000 sq. feet in all, is designed to be a research Mecca for not only Chickasaw scholarship, but Southeastern tribes, and Native Americans as a whole
* The Holisso Center features genealogy and oral history workshops, educational spotlights, digitization events, lecture series, conferences/roundtables, and book signings
* Climate and light controlled, the artifact storage room will protect genealogy collections, photo archives, and historic documents

## Anoli' Theater and Aaimpa' Café

* **Theater**
  + With a 2,400 square-foot screen and the ability to seat 350 people, the theater will offer large-format entertainment that previously was only found in Oklahoma City or Dallas
  + The theater features a 22,000-watt speaker system, a 35/70 mm projector, and a 15/70 mm projector
  + Headphones will be available to translate films into eight languages
  + The theater can show digital films in High-Definition (HD) with incredible detail; the movie *Pearl* was filmed in HD, so the Anoli' Theater can present the picture the way it was meant to be shown
  + Large-format films envelop your senses―the screen fills your eyes with colors and vivid images, and combined with surround-sound speakers, gives the patron a sense of being a part of the film
  + Ever-changing programming includes film and art festivals, script-writing workshops, film-making workshops, and question and answer sessions with producers and directors of films
* **Café**
  + The café menu features appetizers, entrées, salads, sandwiches, soups, lunch specials, children’s meals, and desserts
  + Traditional Chickasaw fare will include grape dumplings, Indian fry bread, burgers and chili made from buffalo meat, and pishofa
  + Seasonal items such as possum grapes, wild onions, and wild greens will be used―the café will also incorporate other native recipes and selections such as rice, beans, and some flours
  + Home-grown vegetables and herbs, actually grown in the CCC greenhouse and the onsite Demonstration Garden, will be used in recipes
  + The Interior dining area is capable of seating more than 200 people; there is also an outdoor eating area, a multi-purpose room, and a catering kitchen

## Aachompa' Gallery Gift Shop

* The Gallery Gift Shop will feature, for example, the following items created by Chickasaw artists: paintings, sculptures, carvings, books, jewelry, beaded items, and traditional dress

## Kochcha' Aabiniili' Amphitheater

* The amphitheater can seat approximately 320 people
* The open-air amphitheater will host intertribal dances, living history performances, star stories, concerts, storytelling, and cultural presentations

## Aba' Aanowa' Sky Terrace

* Extending from the Exhibit Center, the Sky Terrace overlooks the traditional village and stands 40 feet above grade, which equates to 4 stories tall

## Chikasha Inchokka' Traditional Village

* The Traditional Village is comprised of a council house, two summer houses, two winter houses, a corn crib, a replica mound, and a stockade fence
* The large council house structure is 3,000 sq. ft. and stands nearly three stories tall
* Two summer houses, approximately 300 sq. feet each, feature vented eaves to promote circulation of air
* Two round winter houses have a circular entrance, which is designed like a snail’s shell to retain heat
* A raised corn crib stands four feet off the ground to protect stores from moisture and intruders
* The Village also features a replica mound about 20 feet tall, and the whole village is surrounded by a stockade fence
* Programming for the Village includes stomp dancing, storytelling, spirit lessons, language/cultural demonstrations, cultural classes, featured cultural instructors, food festivals, stickball tournaments, and stomp dances

## Honor Garden

* The Honor Garden is a quiet, reflective place, located next to the pond and across from the water pavilion
* With traditional landscaping elements and swirling walls, this peaceful area features laser cut photos of all Chickasaw Nation Hall of Fame inductees
* The Honor Garden also features DMX lighting that has 1,600 different lighting combinations

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